

August 24, 2009

Dear Teacher,

As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in the District of Columbia Public Schools. We want to keep the schools open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season.

We are working closely with the Mayor's Office and the District of Columbia Department of Health to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning our schools. We have developed a Pandemic Influenza Plan in cooperation with the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency and the DC Department of Health.

In order to help our school continue to operate as usual, please take the following steps to help keep your students and yourself getting sick with influenza.

- Educate and encourage students to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze. Also, provide them with easy access to tissues. Remind them to cover coughs or sneezes using their elbow instead of their hand when a tissue is not available.
- Remind students to practice good hand hygiene and provide the time and supplies (easy access to running water and soap or alcohol-based hand cleaners) for them to wash their hands as often as necessary.
- Be a good role model by practicing good hand hygiene and covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing with either a tissue or your sleeve.
- Keep an eye out for sick students and send them to the school health office for further evaluation. Sick people should stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
- Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact such as desks, door knobs, keyboards, or pens, with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas.
- Teachers should also stay home when sick. Stay home until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
- If you are pregnant, have asthma, diabetes, or other conditions that put you at higher risk for complications from the flu, you should speak with your doctor as soon as possible if you develop symptoms of flu-like illness. People at high risk of flu complications who develop flu can benefit from early treatment with antiviral medicines.

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- If you have children, plan ahead for child care if your child gets sick or his or her school is dismissed.

You will find attached the appropriate grade level lesson plan on “Stopping the Spread of Disease” or “Hand Washing”, developed by DCPS Office of Youth Engagement, for incorporation into your students curriculum.

Please remember to collect and submit your students emergency contact information and update your personal contact information with the school office.

For more information, visit the new DCPS website at <http://dcps.dc.gov> or the DC Emergency and Safety Alliance website at <http://esa.dc.gov>. Also, visit <http://doh.dc.gov> for the most current news about influenza in the District and www.flu.gov for national information.

Thank you for your commitment to teaching excellence and for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



Michelle Rhee, DCPS Chancellor